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Narrative of the extraordinary life of
John Conrad Shafford. New York, [1840]

JOHN C. SHAFFORD, THE DUTCH HERMIT,

Who died in April last after having lived 50 years a secluded and lonely life.

NARRATIVE

OF THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF

JOHN CONRAD SHAFFORD,

KNOWN BY MANY BY THE NAME OF THE

DUTCH HERMIT,

Who for the last 50 years has lived a secluded and lonely life, in a log hut in a remote part of the village of Dundee, (Lower Canada,) where he died on the 24th of April last, (1840,) at the age of between 80 and 90.

SHAFFORD early emigrated to Canada, and was induced first to prefer a lonely life in consequence of being deprived of an only child, a beloved daughter, who, when but 15 years of age, was taken prisoner and carried off a captive be the Indians, and who, although she was three months after redeemed by her afflicted father, yet in consequence of the most shameful and beastly treatment she had received from the merciless savages, she expired a wretched victim of their barbarity, three weeks after her liberation.

The particulars of the Captivity and dreadful sufferings of this unfortunate young female, may be found herein detailed, and are sufficient to satisfy the reader, that the North American savages are not in every instance so humane and forbearing to their white *female* captives as they have been represented to be.

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LIFE OF

JOHN CONRAD SHAFFORD,

THE

DUTCH HERMIT.

"Far in a *wild*, unknown to public view,
From youth to age, a reverend *Hermit* grew;
The *moss* his *bed*, a *hut* his *humble cell*,
His *food* the *fruits*, his *drink* the *crystal well*;
Remote from *man*, with God he past his days,
Prayer all his business, all his pleasure *praise!*"

It was while on a hunting excursion near the village of Dundee (Lower Canada,) in the month of November last, (1839,) that the writer of the Narrative here presented, was attracted by the appearance of smoke proceeding from the chimney of a log hut of very humble construction, situated in a forest far from any other dwelling, and apparently so inaccessable, as to be but seldom visited by any *human* being! Impelled by a curiosity to ascertain who the inmates could be, and their motives for selecting a spot so secluded and dreary for their place of abode, the writer approached and knocked at the door of the hut, (constructed of two or three unwrought slabs, which appeared intended as a temporary barricade to the only place of entrance that could be discovered,) and at which soon appeared a human being clad in a garment of fur, and whom, by his wrinkled brow, and long white beard flowing therefrom, it was to be presumed that in *age*, he could not number much less than fourscore and ten years!—on presenting himself to view (however ludricous he might have supposed his appearance must have been to a *stranger*) he appeared in no way alarmed or disconcerted; and the writer having first apologized for the intrusion, as well as his motive for thus unceremoniously

disturbing the old gentleman in his solitary retreat, he appeared not the least displeased with the visit, but disposed to gratify the curiosity of his new and unexpected visitor, by readily replying to interrogatories, as to his motive in thus prefering a secluded life, (for he had intimated that he there dwelt entirely alone,) to that of mingling with human society, which he assured the writer, was in consequence of the heavy afflictions that he had been doomed to experience in early life, which alone first led him to select this retired and *then* unfrequented spot, as the place of his permanent residence ; and having erected with his own hands, the humble hut in which he then dwelt, he had remained the only living occupant thereof for upwards of fifty years!—And, on the enquiry how and in what manner he subsisted, and obtained the necessaries of life, at so advanced an age, he replied, that "at a short distance therefrom, he had under cultivation a small patch of land, which produced him his vegetables, and that he too possessed a good cow, with some few other domestic animals; and in addition to which, the fruits of his labour in his most vigorous days had not yet become quite exhausted, and he could not but flatter himself that with prudence, they might prove even sufficient to serve him for the remainder of his life, which, it was but reasonable to suppose, was then drawing to a close!"—And to the writer's further inquiry that "alone and defenceless, (as he appeared to be,) if he was not under some apprehension that at an unexpected moment he might be visited by robbers, with the view of dispossessing him of his little wealth?" the old man unhesitatingly replied, "well, indeed, I might, was I really as *defenceless* as you represent me, but not so, I have the means of *defence* at hand that I was early taught to believe was sufficient to protect me against an attack of a host of the *vilest* foes! And if you will tarry but a moment, friend, (continued he) I will show you what it is, and then you may judge for yourself!" —As he had previously hinted that hunting had once been *his* favourite amusement, the writer here supposed that his boasted means of *defence*, could be no other (probably) than the possession of some ancient, highly prized, and doubtless well charged *fowling-piece!* and great therefore was his surprise to behold the Old Patriarch on his return, presenting the *Holy Bible*, with the remark that "that was his *safeguard*, by which he had been taught that

if he lived *faithful*, however *lonely* his situation, there would be always a *friend* near, both willing and able to protect him!"

The writer having from a motive of curiosity expressed a desire to become better acquainted with the old gentleman's history, as well as the privilege of being permitted to have an internal view of his humble hut, his request was not only granted, but was very politely invited to walk in for the purpose that he had mentioned, and by whom, as regarded the latter, was found much more wretched than what he had anticipated. The only furniture which it contained, was a block of wood, which served the aged inmate for a chair, and his only bed a hollow log, filled with dry grass and leaves, and of a size so small as to be hardly sufficient to hold his body—and his only cooking utensils, &c. an iron pot, a small broken spider, a pewter poringer and a wooden spoon!—On the writer's remarking, that, "in the choice of his furniture he must have been governed more by the principles of *economy*, than that of *convenience*," "indeed I was, (was his reply,) and well I might be, for when but a boy, I was like too many others of my age, brought to see the folly of *pride* and *extravagance!*—When but sixteen years of age, my parents emigrated from Holland to the United States, and with the small means that they then possessed, they rented a few acres of land in the western part of the State of New York, in the neighbourhood of a well cultivated farm of my uncle (my father's brother) who had emigrated to America eleven years before—by industry and frugality, in four years, the produce of the few acres of land rented by my father, was sufficient to enable him to purchase a small farm, clear of incumbrance, situated in the neighborhood of the Mohawk river, and about which time I became of age, and agreed to work for my father for the term of one year, for the consideration of receiving seven dollars per month, the highest wages then paid—I fulfilled my contract faithfully, as he did his, by paying me at the end of the year the very considerable sum (so then considered by me) of 81 dollars in *silver money*; indeed scarcely had I seen, much less possessed so great a sum before! A sum which I then foolishly believed sufficient to enable me to live *idle* a few months at least—a sum which if prudently laid out would at that period, (as the western parts of the State was then rapidly settling,) have been sufficient to have pur-

chased a very valuable lot of land, which ten years after, would no doubt have yielded me ten times that sum—but, as the saying is "the fool and his money is soon parted," and so with me, for with the pretence of travelling to find a cheaper and more desirable situation, and at such expense that when found, my money was mostly gone, and I had become too poor to purchase, but determining to improve by past folly, and being still in my prime, I again returned to my father, and with whom I once more contracted to work another year for the same wages as before, which I did, and I believe much to his satisfaction, and with equal punctuality on his part received the fruits of my labour at the years' end, with which I very soon after made a purchase of forty acres of good but uncleared land, in that section called Genessee country, then but very thinly settled by white inhabitants. The first year I cleared a few acres and erected me a log house thereon, and the spring following visited my father to inform him of my location &c., but more particularly for the purpose of obtaining as an helpmate, a smart and industrious young woman of about my own age, and of Dutch parents, who lived in the neighborhood of my father, and with whom I had previously become acquainted, and with whom and her oldest brother, I two weeks after returned to what I was then pleased to consider my permanent home, and my wife (as regarded herself) was as pleased on her arrival so to consider it.

In less than one year, by the persevering industry of my wife's brother, and myself, we cleared and sowed with wheat between fifteen and sixteen acres of my small farm, and to which, from year to year (as my land proved productive and the market good for the sale of the produce,) I was enabled to purchase and to add thereto additional lots of land, until I found myself in the year 1788 in possession of a farm sufficiently large to divide into two, and thus to provide for my brother-in-law, who, until that period had industriously wrought for me, and to whom I considered myself much indebted for the success and good fortune that had attended me.—To the time mentioned I had been blessed with but one child, (a daughter,) and had it not been but for an unfortunate circumstance, we might, as we then did (although remotely situated from any considerable settlement,) have long enjoyed unmolested the fruits of our honest industry—but, unfortunately

although the long protracted and expensive war, which had been raging between America and Great Britain, had been brought to a close, yet the savages who had been engaged to take a part in the contest with the latter, appeared unwilling to bury the hatchet, and continued for some time to molest, and either to butcher outright, or to make captives and carry off such of the defenceless white inhabitants on the frontiers as were so unfortunate as to fall into their hands—they even became so bold and blood thirsty, and so eager to obtain the *scalps* of the unfortunate whites, as to extend their excursions in larger or smaller parties to within a few miles of my neighborhood; yet, from me and my family, when visited by them, they had ever met with such a kind and friendly reception, that they had repeatedly given us to understand that we never need be under any fear or apprehension of their troubling us that as they had been informed that I had taken no part in the late war against them, they would sooner afford me their protection than do me an injury; and in token whereof, they frequently proffered me the pipe of peace!—With these assurances of friendship, we were, like many others, lulled into immaginary security, until the close of the year 1790, when a party of the Canadian Indians having crossed the Lake, to invade a settlement of Indians with whom they had been, and were still at war, the latter, through fear of being overpowered by the former, fled in much confusion to obtain the assistance of a friendly tribe further south, and to within a few miles of which tribe they were pursued by their invading foes! but, not being so successful in their pursuit as they anticipated, they returned, filled with rage and disappointment, and with the avowed determination to revenge themselves on the whites, with whom their Indian foes had been on friendly terms during their contest with Great Britain; and, agreeably to their threats (as it was afterward ascertained,) on their return surprized, murdered and scalped several of the defenceless inhabitants, and took some prisoners, previous to their arrival in my neighborhood, which was a little past nine o'clock in the evening; and I had but just time hastily to secure the doors of my house, without the recollection at the moment that my daughter (my only child) had stepped out on some necessary occasion a few minutes previous, and whose almost immediate cries for help, too well assured me that she had

fallen into the hands of the merciless wretches! who after making two or three unsuccessful attempts to force my doors, departed, having, as I then supposed, either murdered, or, what was almost as much to be dreaded, carried off my poor child a captive!

Early the morning ensuing confirmed my fears, as to the melancholy fact of her having been carried off by them, as her lifeless body, or any appearance of her having been murdered, could not be discovered; and as soon as I could convey information of my loss to my neighbour, (who lived to the distance of about one mile,) he with myself, and accompanied by my brother-in-law, started on horseback in pursuit, with the distant hope of being able to overtake the savages previous to their crossing the Lake; but in this we were disappointed, for on reaching the Lake the next day we were informed by a friendly Indian that he had noticed them crossing over to the Canada side two or three hours previous to our arrival; and, in confirmation that they were the same party which we were in pursuit of, he had particularly noticed that among other prisoners, there was a young female, answering the description given of my daughter!—As we at that time possessed not the means to cross the Lake to pursue them further, on receiving the information of their having actually crossed, we gave up the pursuit, and I returned home to my disconsolate wife, and who could not be made to believe otherwise than that the life of her poor child had not only been spared, to experience the most cruel tortures that savage barbarity could invent, or inflict!—and who could only be consoled with the promise, that, as soon as possible, I would pursue the savage ruffians into Canada, and if so fortunate as to find our child alive, I would spare no pains to effect her redemption at any price; and for this purpose, the week following I left home, and succeeded in reaching Canada, to learn that the Indians who composed the expedition were chiefly those of the St. Francis tribe, as they were then denominated, and who dwelt some distance from where I then was, to the north; and thither with some difficulty, I repaired, where although I met with some who confessed that they were attached to the expedition, yet from them could obtain no other information of the fate of my daughter, than that they had (by the intercession of their chief,) concluded to spare her life, and as he had been instrumental in saving her

from the scalping knife, he claimed her as his own, on their arrival at their settlement; and as none appeared disposed to dispute rights with him, he had compelled her to accompany him to his settlement, (he being of another tribe, still further north,) and where, if still living, they had no doubt that he too highly valued his "young squaw" to be very willing to part with her!

By this information (the truth of which I had no great reason to doubt,) I began to despair of being soon able to find and to effect the release of my poor child, as the tribe with which she was now represented a prisoner, had ever been considered a wandering tribe, and without any permanent place of residence—as my only alternative now, and what appeared to me to be the best and only means to recover her, I, previous to my return, publicly made known to every Indian that I met with, (particularly those of the St. Francis tribe) that to any one of them who would thereafter restore to me my daughter, alive, I would present the sum of 200 dollars in silver money; and having received the assurances of many, that, for the value of the reward, they would do all in their power to find out to what part of the interior she was conveyed, and if a possible thing, to assist her in effecting her escape, if her liberty could not be otherwise obtained, I once more returned to my afflicted wife, and where in a state of melancholy suspense, we passed nearly three months, without receiving any tidings whatever respecting the fate of our unfortunate daughter; which, from the well known character of the savages into whose hands she had fallen, we had no reason to believe could be the best, as after my return, I received information from some of my neighbours of many other depredations committed by the same party of Indians, on their return from their unsuccessful expedition.—The most melancholy instance was that of the destruction of the lives of almost every member of the unfortunate family of a Mr. John Corbly, a preacher of the gospel; the particulars of which I received from his own lips, and were these—that "having an appointment to preach at a short distance from his dwelling house, he left home for that purpose, with his wife and five children, and while they proceeded forward he walked behind them leisurely, without apprehending any danger; and while thus proceeding he was suddenly alarmed by the screeching of his family, to the relief

of whom he immediately hastened, vainly seeking a club or some other weapon to defend himself as he ran—when within a few rods of his family, his unfortunate wife perceiving him approaching, cried out and begged him to make his escape—at which instant, an Indian, (who it was supposed with several others had lain in ambush,) ran up and attempted to shoct him, but his gun missing fire, Mr. Corbly succeeded in making his escape—the Indians immediately thereupon commenced a murderous attack on his defenceless family! His wife was first shot and scalped by the Indian who had attempted to shoot him (Mr. C.) and a small infant which she carried in her arms shared no better fate!—his little son six years of age, they next dispatched, mangling his body in a shocking manner with their tomahawks, as they did his little daughter still younger.—During the dreadful slaughter his oldest child (a daughter) attempted to escape by concealing herself in a hollow tree a few rods from the scene of action, and observing the Indians retiring (as she supposed) she deliberately crept from the place of her concealment, when one of the Indians who still remained on the ground espying her, knocked her down with his tomahawk and scalped her!" This was but one of the many instances of savage barbarity exercised toward the defenceless white inhabitants, and it was supposed, by one and the same party of Indians on their return to Canada.

As we could obtain no tidings of our daughter (as I observed) and three months had passed since the fatal night that the cruel savages conveyed her away, we began almost to despair of being ever again permitted to meet her on earth—but, while our apprehensions were at the greatest height, that such would be our misfortune, we were, in the dead of night, suddenly awakened by the well known yell of savages, who immediately thereupon commenced knocking at my door with their clubs and tomahawks, and in broken English requesting admittance, as they "had brought home my captive child!"—but believing this to be too good news to be true, and that it was nothing more or less than a stratagem of the treacherous savages to gain admittance, and perhaps for no other purpose than to take our scalps, I at first paid no other attention thereto than to put myself in the best possible state of defence and to call out to them, and assure them that "I would

shoot the first Indian that should enter my house against my will!" this, however, so far from intimidating them in the least, seemed to have a contrary effect, inasmuch as that they continued to knock at my door with increased violence, and at the same time to repeat their assurances that they meant me no harm, and had come for no other purpose than to restore to me my child, whose liberation they had, agreeable to my views, providentially effected! —as this was spoken in a tone peculiar only to those of the savage tribe who are *pacifically* disposed, I began to think more favourably of them, and that what they had represented to me to be the fact, might even so prove—and, to guard myself well against the possibility of deception, I told them that nothing but hearing the *voice* of my daughter would satisfy me that they were friends, and my daughter was once more at liberty, and then, one of their number.—Immediately upon which my poor child, (with a voice as loud as her enfeebled health would admit of) declared to me that "it was all positively true, and begged that I would open the door as soon as possible, that she might enjoy the privilege of beholding the faces of her dear parents once more!"—it was my daughter's voice! yes, I could not be deceived!—it was enough! and required no savage assistance now to force back the bolts, or to remove the bars of my doors, with which I had taken the precaution to secure them—no, it was done by myself alone, and in an instant, as if by magic—and at the next, my long lost child was in my arms, when the mingled emotions of joy and grief produced thereby, prevented any other utterance, on the part of either, than the exclamation "my father!" "my child!"—while the savages who accompanied her, stood during the affecting moment, apparently motionless, and grinning, as it were, a ghastly smile!—I had indeed, to my inexpressible joy, recovered my beloved daughter, but, alas, she appeared but the *shadow* of what she once was; and too evident was it by her weak and emaciated appearance, that the three months that she had been in the power of the merciless savages, that she had suffered every thing but death itself, as her tale of woe afterward confirmed! Early the morning ensuing the savages (through whose instrumentality I had been enabled to recover my child,) becoming impatient to return, I paid them their promised reward, in hard money, and they departed, apparently

highly pleased with their good fortune in receiving so considerable a sum, for services so easily performed; they having engaged to pay the young chief but the sum of twenty dollars on their return in exchange for the fair captive, who he represented to them had become his *wife* by *adoption!* As soon as my poor ill-fated child had become in some degree composed, and had gained sufficient strength so to do, she narrated to me and her afflicted mother, the heart rending trials and afflictions that she had been made the subject of, from the time that misfortune placed her in the power of the savages, until the moment that she was providentially restored to liberty, which as far as my recollection serves me, was in substance as follows:—

"That on the fatal evening that she was made a prisoner of, the savages seized her at the moment that she was about to enter the back door of the house, dragged her a few rods therefrom, and bound her with a cord to a tree, where were three other white captives (males) in a similar condition; which, when done, they returned to commence an attack on the house, and in which they were but a short time employed, for they not only found the doors well secured, but at the very moment hearing the sound of a horn, and the report of a musket, they became apparently much frightened, (probably supposing themselves pursued) unbound her and the other captives, in great haste, and setting out upon a trot, drove her and the other prisoners before them, whom, if they attempted to slacken their pace in any degree, were unmercifully beat and scourged with rods which the savages had each prepared himself for that purpose—their bitter lamentations and entreaties for mercy had no other effect than to induce them to attempt to increase their pace by a still more severe application of their rods! —it was in this way that my daughter was compelled to travel through an almost impenetrable forest, until the break of day, when her strength began to fail her, and she to manifest an inability to travel, in the manner mentioned, any further—the savages perceiving this, they came to a halt, when a warm dispute arose among them, some (as she was afterward informed) being in favour of dispatching her on the spot, and to be no longer troubled with her, while others (among whom was their young chief) were in favour of sparing her life, which opinion appeared at length to prevail,

through the influence of their leader, who at this moment dismounting from the horse on which he rode, and having with the assistance of another Indian placed my daughter on the back thereof, she was thereto secured; when a part of the savages who appeared to have disagreed in opinion with their chief, and were probably in favour of her being otherwise disposed of, (which indeed would have proved a great mercy to her, if permitted to judge by the dreadful treatment that she afterward experienced) now separated from those by whom she was still held a prisoner, and accompanied by the three other captives, took their departure in another direction.

She thought she probably would have been treated with less inhumanity by the savages, had they not by some means or other been plentifully supplied with spirituous liquor, with which they became more or less intoxicated, and frequently beat her for no other reason, as she could conjecture, than that their natural barbarous dispositions lead them so to do!—as they compelled the beast on which she rode to travel mostly on a trot, and nothing being allowed her but a tattered blanket to ride upon, she would not have been able to have kept her position had she not been supported by two of the savages, who walked one on her right and the other on her left for that purpose—and to keep her erect and to prevent her from pitching forward, another who walked in the rear, and as occasion required held her tightly by the hair of her head, and who appeared quite indifferent as to the pain that it caused her; while the horse was led by the young chief who walked forward for that purpose, and it was in this way that they travelled until they reached the Lake, where having found a boat at hand suitable for their purpose, they all crossed therein, but which being of only sufficient size to hold themselves, the chief was obliged to abandon his horse, but in some way or other supplied his place with another as soon as they reached the opposite shore, and in the same manner as before crossing the Lake, continued to travel the two proceeding days, without making any longer stop than time sufficient to partake sparingly of their provision, which consisted mostly of smoked venison, which each carried in his pack for that purpose. At the close of the fifth day from that on which my daughter became their prisoner, they

reached an Indian settlement, which proved to be the abiding place of two or three of the savages in whose power she had last been—here another warm dispute arose respecting (as she conjectured) whose captive she should be; many angry words were exchanged, accompanied with frightful grimaces, and a display of their long knives and tomahawks, when at length, in the greatest heat of the contest, (and probably with the intention of putting an end thereto) a lusty and most powerful looking savage rushed upon her, with an uplifted tomahawk, and when to appearance, on the eve of dashing out her brains, received a severe blow from the tomahawk of the young chief, which laid him prostrate and senseless on the ground, and which appeared to have the desired effect to decide the dispute, as she was immediately thereupon dismounted and led off in triumph by one whom she then vainly believed would prove the protector of her person, as well as her life, but in this she found herself too soon unhappily deceived!

The chief (as he was denominated) was accompanied but by one other Indian, and who through fear of being pursued by some of those who were left behind, or for some other reason, the two savages travelled with much greater speed than on the day preceding, and greatly to her suffering compelled her to keep pace with them until sunset, when having sought an encampment for the night, in the midst of a thicket, where the young chief having signified to her by signs and in very broken English that he had preserved her life that she might become his adopted "squaw!" attempted to take liberties with her, which was the first insult of the kind that she had received from either him or any one of his party, since the evening of her unfortunate capture, and who on that occasion met with such a repulse as to deter him from a repetition, at that time, of his wicked and beastly design—in every other respect she was treated with more humanity than by some of those who last left them; but the treatment that she then received was of a nature to satisfy her what she might expect from this savage ruffian, if it should be her misfortune to remain long in his power! nor in these awful apprehensions was she disappointed, for on their arrival two days after at his settlement (situated near the boarder of the Lake) she was proclaimed by himself and others his "young captive *squaw!*" in great triumph, and by a

general pow-wow, and after being fancifully painted, and decorated after their Indian manner she was forcibly conveyed to his wigwam, where she was given in charge of two or three squaws (one of whom was very aged) by whom she was given to understand that that was to be the place of her future abode!

It was at that moment (my poor child observed) she would have given worlds, had she possessed them, to have been once more at liberty, and under the protection of her dear parents, from the outrages of a savage monster, who appeared not in the least affected with a view of the state of wretchedness in which he had placed her, but to the contrary, with much seeming unconcern left her the morning ensuing (in a state of mental distraction) to re-engage in his usual hunting excursions, and with her most earnest prayer that he might never be permitted to return again!—she was left in charge of his mother and sister, by whom during his absence she was most cruelly treated; they kept her almost constantly employed in pounding parched or baked corn, in a large wooden mortar, which when sufficiently refined, they manufactured into bread, which with a few slices of half putrid venson, served them for their daily food, and of which they allowed her barely sufficient to sustain nature!—in four days from the time of his departure the young chief returned, at whose appearance she could not but shudder at the recollection of the treatment that she had and might again expect to receive from him!—on learning from her (by signs) the cruel treatment that she had received in his absence, the unfeeling brute seemed more gratified than displeased therewith, and in no way disposed (as it proved) to spare the poor child from still greater torments, and that too, apparently to the great satisfaction and *amusement* of both his mother and sister!

The morning following, she found that although her time was to be devoted to some other employment than that in which she had been engaged, yet, to such as proved still more unpleasant and equally laborious, and which was no other than that of dissecting and preparing the carcases, (by salting and smoking) such animals as the young chief had returned with from his hunting excursion; and in the performance of which, being not much acquainted, she made but very slow progress, and for which she was so severely chastised by both the old squaw and her son as to bring

upon her a settled fever, with which she was twelve days confined to her bed (if a few dry corn husks could be so called) without being able but with great difficulty to help herself; and should (she thought) certainly have died, had she not during her illness been treated with a little more lenity, which was probably from motives of gain, more than that of pity! but, no sooner was it perceived that she had in a small degree recovered her health and strength, than she was again compelled to become the victim of shameful insult, and to the performance of the daily labour allotted her, and which in some way or other she was compelled to perform with little intermission until the happy day of her deliverance arrived, and until which time the young chief was more than half his time absent on a hunting, fishing, or some other excursion, when she was always left, as in the first instance, in charge of the old squaw and her daughter, and whose greatest desire it seemed to be to see who should outrival each other in acts of cruelty towards her!

The fortunate day (which was to prove the last of her captivity) the hut, or wigwam, to which she had been almost constantly confined, the three months that she had been held in bitter captivity, was unexpectedly visited by four strange savages, bearing a white flag, which with them, as well as with those more civilized, is ever viewed as an emblem of *peace*—their first inquiry was for the young chief, with whom they represented to his mother (the old squaw) that their business was not only of a pacific nature, but of very great importance—the chief soon after entered, between whom and the four visiting savages a conversation ensued, and although my child too imperfectly understood their language to be able to determine the tenor thereof, yet as the four Indians in the course of the conversation frequently pointed to her, she was not without her suspicions that it was something relating to herself, and which was afterward confirmed, (as three of said savages were about retiring) by the chief's directing her by signs to follow them, in the mean time repeating the words "go away!" "go away!" "white face!" and one of the three at the same moment taking her by the arm led her from the hut, while two of the others (the fourth remaining) closely followed behind—to what place they were about to conduct her, or for what purpose, she

knew not, nor did she much care, for if to dispatch her at once, with their clubs or tomahawks for the sake of her scalp, it was her opinion that such a death would in all probability be instantaneous, which would be far more desireable than the cruel lingering death which she must have experienced had it been her lot to have remained longer in captivity, subject to the savage will and brutal treatment of one in whose power she had been the three last preceding months. But, as it proved, it was the will of providence that a better fate should attend her—that the savages in whose power she was now placed intended her no serious injury, she was perfectly satisfied when they appeared in no way disposed to treat her but with the greatest degree of humanity—while with them she suffered nothing for the want of food, and that of a good and wholesome kind, and as her deprivations and sufferings had rendered her too feeble to walk but with a very slow pace, they, without her desiring it, constructed with poles a litter, by the aid of which they took turns to carry her, and she was thus conveyed nearly the whole distance on her return, which was performed in six days !"

As the poor old man concluded the melancholy tale of the cruel and unprecedented sufferings of his unfortunate child, the tears streamed profusedly down his furrowed cheeks, and his grief apparently at that moment so great as almost to forbid him utterance! it was some time before he became sufficiently composed to continue his narration, and to the inquiry " if his unfortunate daughter long survived the brutal treatment she received from the savages while in their power ?" his reply was (still sobing) " no ! no ! my dear friend, she did not—the poor child lived but just three weeks after her return !—her constitution was too much impaired by what she had endured from the hands of a savage monster, to admit of her recovery ! in three weeks from the time of her deliverance from savage outrage, she bid an eternal adieu to this troublesome world, and left me childless at the age of 37 !—and as if my cup of woe was not yet full, but three months after the death of my daughter, I was bereaved of my wife! whose sickness I had no doubt was produced, and her death hastened, by the melancholy and untimely death of her unfortunate daughter ! Thus, friend, was it the will of providence to deprive me of both

wife and child, and I being left the only remaining member of *my* once happy family, I thus early felt a disposition and perfect willingness to retire from the world, and the society of my fellow-creatures, sure as I was, that from that moment I should find little or no comfort in either—I sought a purchaser for my farm then under a good state of cultivation, and disposed of it for the considerable sum of $1200, paid me in silver and gold, which not then having an immediate use for, I deposited it for safe keeping with a friend—and then shouldering my gun and knapsack (the latter well filled with ammunition) and with no other living companion than my faithful dog, I bent my course to this part of the country, then but very thinly settled, but the woods I found abounding with wild game of almost every kind—and here (thought I) is the place to which providence has directed and marked out for me, as I can here, in the midst of this lonely forest, dwell in peace and quietness, undisturbed by the society of my fellow beings; yes, here in solitude I could indulge in melancholy, and enjoy too that quiet repose which the busy world are so much strangers to—and on this spot I nearly fifty years ago laid the foundation of the log cabin which has ever since been my abiding place.

At the time of my first settlemement here, the land was as you may suppose in quite a wild and uncleared state, there not being at that period another white inhabitant settled nearer to me (as I could learn) than at the distance of twenty or thirty miles—and it is improbable that at that time the land hereabouts was claimed as the rightful property of any *one* individual; and I have thought as I have frequently been told by my nearest neighbours, that it justly belongs to me by possession—but in a few years the whites began to make encroachments, and have so continued to do ever since, so that at this time I have neighbours in almost every direction within half a mile of me, and this I find quite too near for my comfort, for I can truly say that since the melancholy moment in which I was bereaved of my family, I have never so well enjoyed life as when I lived at so great a distance from them that it was rare that I beheld the face of a white man oftener than once in three or four months—there were at one time about fifty Indians situated within a few miles of me, who as they informed me were

the descendants of the once numerous and powerful tribe of the Cohnawahgans—I always found them peaceable and well disposed —sixty years ago they represented their tribe as very numerous, and could then number seven or eight hundred warriors, but since then have suffered greatly from the attacks of other tribes at war with them—that in the contest between Great Britain and America, they were with some few other tribes employed by and took part with the former, while they were opposed by the Onondagoes, Onidas, Senecas, and other tribes, who took part with the Americans ; that in several expeditions against these tribes they were unsuccessful, and lost a great number of their best warriors, but whenever successful they never failed to retaliate and to put their prisoners to death in a manner that was attended with the greatest degree of cruelty !

As the forest abounded with a variety of game, and furnished me plentifully with food while my ammunition lasted, I had no occasion to cultivate the land until some time after I had completed my habitation, when I cleared up and planted with vegetables the few rods which I at present improve for that purpose ; and with this I am perfectly satisfied, and crave no larger inheritance that this world can afford—for ten years I depended altogether on the game with which my neighboring woods abounded, and the vegetables which my garden produced me, for food, when having made a journey to the States to obtain the proceed of my farm, on my return I purchased me a cow, which I drove home from the distance of fifty miles, and when she became too aged to afford me much milk, I butchered her, and supplied her place with another, and at the present time possess the third, which still yields me a plentiful supply of good milk, and probably will continue so to do as long as I am permitted to live !"

" It is now, as I observed, near fifty years since I first selected this spot as the place of my future abode, and have here dwealt alone and at peace with the world, for I do not know that I have an enemy on earth, and in all this time my health has been remarkably good, having never, as I recollect, experienced a day's sickness, which, perhaps, may be imputed to the *temperate* manner in which I have lived, having never tasted or craved in the time any other drink than the milk of my cow, or the pure water that

a neighboring spring affords me—nor since my residence here has my life been but once in jeopardy, which was in the instance of a sudden attack frem a bear, which was occasioned by my having unwisely robbed her of one of her young cubs, that I was attempting to convey home alive, and to recover which I was pursued and overtaken by the dam, and after being most severely handled, to save my life, I was obliged at length to yield to her what she indeed had the best claim to. Among my other properties, I possess that which I esteem the most valuable, and which is no other than that which I exhibited to you a few moments ago, as my best defence against man's greatest enemy, the *creature man* as well as the *evil devices* of one who is very justly considered the chief *instigator of the wickedness of man!*—it is this precious volume, my friend, that has afforded me unspeakable comfort and consolation in my most solitary and gloomy moments—it teaches me that this world of trouble and affliction is not always to be my home or abiding place, but that there is another and far better state of existence, for those who accept of the terms of offered mercy—it teaches me to contemplate and admire the goodness of the Almghty, and that Christianity supplies every deficiency of human nature ; satisfies every real want, and gratifies every reasonable desire—by sad experience I know that we live in a world of sorrow, subjected to many afflictions, and have need of consolation under them, and it is the precious contents of this holy book that can alone afford it—and I believe that I can say in truth, that it is the first book, the best book, and the oldest book in the world —it brings the best tidings, and affords the best comfort, to the inquiring and disconsolate !"

The good, and apparently, *happy* old man here concluded his narrative, which had closely engaged the attention of the writer for nearly an hour, and which he viewed of so much interest, as to induce him to beg of the old gentleman to repeat, in such manner as would enable him to take notes thereof, which he was enabled to do, being fottunately provided with pen, ink and paper—and the interesting narrative as then twice related to him, is, he can assure the public, the same in substance, as is here presented to them—and for the information of his readers, the writer would here add, that the aged father who is the principal subject of it

has (since the visit of the writer) been called to his heavenly home, to receive that rich reward to which we think that most of his readers will believe that his pious and exemplary life very justly entitles him—the following obituary notice of his death is copied from a late New York paper:—

"Died in the township of Dundee, (L. C.) on the 24th April last (1840) John C. Shafford, aged 84. He was a native of Germany, and was best known by the name of the *Dutch Hermit* —when he first took up his abode where he ended his days, the place was wild and lonely as any misanthrope could wish—foxes, bears and squirrels, &c., were his only companions for many a long year; he stated while living, that great afflictions was what first led him to seek his secluded and solitary abode—he lived in a log hut of the rudest architecture, having neither door nor window, if we except a hole through which he made his exit and entrance—the furniture of his abode was as rude as could be well conceived, consisting of a few cooking utensils, a block of wood for his chair, a hollow log his only bed, his clothes such, probably, as Robinson Crusoe wore in the days of yore, his employment the cultivation of a few rods of ground, on which he raised corn, potatoes, and other vegetables, enough to support himself and domestics, consisting of pigs, poultry, and latterly a cow and her progeny. For a few years past he felt much annoyed at the inroads mankind made in the woods, which until then secluded him from the rest of the world, having for such a length of time considered himself lord of all he surveyed; he felt quite uncomfortable at having neighbors within view of his hut, when for many a long year the nearest human habitation was many miles off. He lived a harmless and inoffensive life. He retained his faculties to the last and died in the hope of a blessed immortality. He was removed in his last illness to one of his neighbor's houses."

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Although the deceased for many years prefered the life of a Recluse, to that of mingling with human society, and dwelt alone in a solitary cabin, yet even there, how much more contented and happy may he have been than he who would prefer the gaudy palace, as well as the society of the gay and opulent! in his retirement, with no other companion than that precious volume he no doubt not only spent the last years of his life, profitably, but with a hopeful cheerfulness—his death bed (however small may have been his earthly possessions) may yet have been full of triumph!—to him death could not have come in a moment of surprise, and terrify him with the immediate prospect of eternity! he no doubt was perfectly sensible at that important moment, that he was only exchanging his frail tenement of clay, for a permanent and glorious abode n his Father's kingdom!—In this world of woe, happiness appears to be sought after by almost every one, by the old and the young, by the rich and the poor; and yet, comparatively speaking, but few obtain it—this being the case, does not the question naturally arise, which is the proper course to pursue? and may we not answer, "love the Lord thy God with all your heart, and lead a virtuous life!"

Happiness does not consist, (as many have supposed) in the possession of riches—to enjoy pure happiness it is not by any means necessary for one to enjoy the "good things of life" to over abundance—many a poor subject is happier than his king; and like the pious *Shafford*, many a Hermit may live in a retired vale, and his secluded and humble dwelling almost unknown to man, yet happiness may ever reign within. Whether rich or poor, or whether we live a secluded life or not, if we wish to be happy, our thoughts must be pure, our desires rational, and our sentiments virtuous—it cannot be purchased by the puerile toys of this world; to possess it in its purity we must lead a life in accordance with the Bible; if we will do this, our felicity will be great; yes, then, and not till then, shall we obtain the long searched for treasure!